



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

February 17, 2021
Regular Monthly Meeting

Present

Nancy Salamoun, Manager of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Lara Versari, Commissioner
Michael Henson, Commissioner

Members of the Public Present

Sidd Pattanayak
Lindsey Green
Christopher Spicer Hankle
Amy Henson
Keidrick Roy

Guests: Sgt. Perrone now Lt. Perrone

Meeting with Sgt. Perrone

Sgt. Perrone is now Lt. Perrone and he is leaving the Department. Sgt. Shackelford will be taking over.

Hate Crime Reporting Form

The Department is working on making the form available in other languages. This should go live soon.

The Department is looking for ways to market the form. They want help in getting the word out in getting the message out on hate crimes.

Reporting Process

The reporting process is the following: The Department will open an investigation with as little information as provided. They have a mandated hate crime officer that is trained who will exclusively handle this. A report is always generated.

Services Provided Once Reported

If the complainant leaves a contact number, they can provide them with advice on services are available.

The Department has a full-time victim witness advocate in our office. She is a civilian. She will find any resource for victims. She mostly handles DV and SA but is also involved in these instances.

The Department handles these cases on a case by case basis and move at the victim's pace. The best means of assisting is through the AG's office who has an office that assists victims

Hate Crime Stats

Lt. Perrone ran the numbers for 5 years and looked at each incident for 2019 and 2020. In 2019 there were 3 incidents, 2 hate instances but not criminal, 1 hate crime. In 2020, there were 12 pieces of hate activity. 5 of them are hate crimes. It seems that we are receiving more this year, but 2019 was low. Lt. Perrone

believes that we do have underreporting either due to fear of police and individuals without immigration documentation.

Loophole

Recently a vandalized fence that was vandalized property with hate words. But because the victims did not own the property, it was a loophole and it couldn't be put in as a hate crime, because they didn't own the fence then there was no damage to their property.

Reporting Back to HRC

The new Sargent can attend meetings on some kind of frequency to report back and get feedback.

The new Sargent will be putting together a fact sheet.

MLK event Recap

The Commissioners/Volunteers reflected on the recent MLK Event.

Enjoyed having so many student participants. It would be willing to pursue even if we do an in-person event. Having a video of children. The multi-media helped and enhanced the feeling. Loved that teen empowerment participated.

Want to explore the idea of collaborating with Teen Empowerment. Want to reach out about future collaborations.

Immigrant Stories

The Commissioner and Volunteers are interested in working with the Community to gather stories from Immigrant residents.

The following ideas were discussed.

Start off with one population. Restaurant owners. Start with a segment and make it as low touch. Do a video to introduce who they are and let people know about their restaurant and then their origin story. Having in a way an infomercial for immigrant businesses. Maybe having a narrator in the beginning. Gives them a marketing tool as well. See if this is something that could take hold. Maybe these could be a minute or two.

Somerville media center would be interested in assisting. Keidrick can make the connection.

There has been a recent rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans, maybe focus the initial attempts on some of those stories.

Commissioner mentioned that for Portuguese Businesses there is a lot of need. Add a question about how the pandemic was impacted, positively or negatively. Some have been able to thrive. It could be useful for everyone to learn from each other. Not necessarily to see them as victims. Lara will speak with Somerviva to get help with connecting.

Michael is on the board of East Somerville Main Streets and can contact several of these restaurants. Wants a coherent message of what we want to do. Have some sample questions. Four or five questions.

As HRC we are interested in fostering the culture of human rights. To the story tellers and those who are asking the questions, there is a need to dialogue about this.

So much gets lost about basic rights. These are positive stories.

A supplemental Meeting is scheduled for March 3rd at 6:30pm to discuss the Immigrant Stories Project in more detail. The regularly monthly meeting will be on March 17th at 6:30pm.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:00pm